



**Director of  
Central  
Intelligence**

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# **The Changing Sino-Soviet Relationship**

**National Intelligence Estimate  
Memorandum to Holders**

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*NIE 13/11-84  
June 1985*

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## MEMORANDUM TO HOLDERS

NIE 13/11-84

### THE CHANGING SINO-SOVIET RELATIONSHIP

Information available as of 14 June 1985 was used in the preparation of this Estimate, which was approved by the National Foreign Intelligence Board on 20 June 1985.

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THIS ESTIMATE IS ISSUED BY THE DIRECTOR OF CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE.

THE NATIONAL FOREIGN INTELLIGENCE BOARD CONCURS.

*The following intelligence organizations participated in the preparation of the Estimate:*

The Central Intelligence Agency, the Defense Intelligence Agency, the National Security Agency, and the intelligence organization of the Department of State.

*Also Participating:*

The Assistant Chief of Staff for Intelligence, Department of the Army

The Director of Naval Intelligence, Department of the Navy

The Assistant Chief of Staff, Intelligence, Department of the Air Force

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### SCOPE NOTE

This Memorandum to Holders covers the remaining two-year time frame of NIE 13/11-84. It examines the incentives and constraints on improvement in Sino-Soviet relations and indicates probable future developments.

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## KEY JUDGMENTS

Several significant events in Sino-Soviet relations in the past year have led us to reexamine the conclusions of NIE 13/11-84, completed in April 1984. In spite of the current leadership tensions apparent in Beijing and the recent succession of Mikhail Gorbachev as Secretary General in the Soviet Union, we judge that the Estimate's major conclusions are still valid:

- Moscow's and Beijing's fundamental strategic outlooks will remain at odds.
- The basic differences at the root of their animosity for more than two decades will remain; each side will continue to be deeply suspicious of the long-range intentions of the other.
- The Chinese leadership will continue to see the positive economic and strategic value of China's relationship with the United States.
- There will be a further warming in the atmosphere of the relationship and expansion in trade, scientific, technological, cultural, and educational ties.

The advances in the relationship over the past year have been generally consistent with the Estimate's description of the most likely course in Sino-Soviet relations: the level of hostility between Moscow and Beijing will decrease, and there will be additional agreements on trade and economic and other such secondary matters. These changes have come, however, a little more quickly and have gone a little further than the Estimate of a year ago held likely.

Both Beijing and Moscow probably genuinely desire ways to lower tensions for a variety of domestic political and economic reasons. Each side appears to be testing the other's flexibility and intentions—to determine whether something substantial can be attained at low cost. Moreover, overtures by both sides earlier this year probably were also intended for the benefit of third parties, particularly the United States. Deng Xiaoping, for example, has sent signals that he wants more US cooperation in helping to bring about reunification with Taiwan. Beijing's positive gestures to the Soviets could be partly designed to pressure Washington to be more responsive on this issue and less receptive to Taiwan's interests in receiving more modern arms.

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We probably will witness continued advancement in the secondary aspects of the relationship as well as limited party-to-party contacts that may gradually take on a more formal character:

- Additional trade, scientific, technical, educational, and cultural agreements will be signed; the Soviets will help refurbish a few factories built with their aid during the 1950s.
- An agreement to open at least two, possibly four, consulates probably will be signed; additional border crossing points will be opened.
- There will probably be additional state-to-state contacts, such as parliamentary exchanges; there may be consultations between Foreign Ministers and possibly Premiers.
- There could be some agreement on Confidence Building Measures along the border, such as mutual advanced notification of troop movements or exercises.

Neither Moscow nor Beijing, however, will make the concessions necessary for their relationship to go beyond the bounds outlined above. They almost certainly will not make any significant progress on matters related to Afghanistan or Indochina. We now believe that talks on border territorial issues are more likely to resume than the Estimate predicted. However, even if border talks do begin again, we judge that resolution of the border territorial disputes as well as regional security issues will remain elusive. An understanding to “thin out” or withdraw some forces from the border is slightly more possible.

The most likely course of Sino-Soviet relations will not harm any significant US interests. We judge that for the next two years and probably longer Beijing will not move to an equidistant position in its relations with Moscow and Washington. Chinese leaders keenly appreciate the United States’ value as a strategic counterweight to Moscow and as a source of much-needed economic and military technology.

There are, however, several uncertainties that could affect our analysis:

- Moscow, under Gorbachev’s new leadership, could make a greater-than-expected effort to accommodate Chinese security concerns, which might lead to a more substantial rapprochement.
- A power struggle could erupt within the Chinese leadership before or after Deng dies. We believe that disagreements over a number of issues, primarily the pace and scope of economic reform and leadership changes, have strained relations among

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senior Chinese leaders. Questions concerning relations with the United States and the USSR have become part of these debates. Given our uncertainty over the outcome of these debates, we cannot rule out the possibility of Beijing's taking steps sooner than we anticipate to further improve relations with Moscow.

- Deng's ambitious economic reforms could experience serious problems, which could lead to a weakening of his political position and that of his chosen successors. A retreat from the goals of Deng's economic program would diminish one of the Chinese motivations for good relations with the United States—the need for US technology and investment. However, because the Soviets are not likely to make major force reductions along the border, or to back away from their goals in Indochina and Afghanistan, any new leadership in Beijing would face the same strategic situation that currently limits close Sino-Soviet political relations.
- A deterioration of relations between the United States and China over Taiwan could lead Beijing to attempt a much more even balance in its relations with the two superpowers than currently exists. We do not believe, however, that in loosening ties to the United States the Chinese would move substantially closer to the USSR.
- Crises over Afghanistan, Pakistan, Indochina, Thailand, and other areas could lead to a new estrangement in Sino-Soviet relations.
- Soviet moves to draw North Korea closer could intensify Chinese suspicions of Soviet intentions.

If our most likely scenario proves wrong and Moscow and Beijing go substantially further in improving their relationship, then US interests would be directly and adversely affected. Moves such as rapidly establishing more formal party-to-party contacts, an agreement to withdraw or draw down Soviet forces on the Sino-Soviet/Sino-Mongolian border, and resolution of the border territorial disputes would have a powerful impact on international perceptions. Other countries might conclude that such developments meant that the United States was "losing" a strategic asset and that Moscow had eased the threat of a two-front war, thus strengthening its position vis-a-vis NATO. More important, Soviet leaders might conclude that the general strategic danger to the USSR had eased, leading them to adopt an even more aggressive attitude toward the United States.

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## DISCUSSION

## What Has Happened

1. Several significant events have occurred since the Estimate was completed in April of last year (for details, see Chronology in the annex). Two of these events have been pivotal in further warming the atmosphere of Sino-Soviet relations and increasing trade and economic ties:

- First Deputy Premier Arkhipov was received in Beijing in December 1984, making him the highest ranking Soviet official to visit China in 16 years.<sup>1</sup>
- Mikhail Gorbachev was appointed Soviet General Secretary after the death of Chernenko.

2. To create a positive atmosphere and ensure the success of Arkhipov's visit, Beijing made unusual efforts, such as remaining silent on the fifth anniversary of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and briefly withdrawing troops from the Sino-Vietnamese border. The visit was described by both sides as a success. Moscow and Beijing signed an expanded trade agreement plus new agreements on economic cooperation and exchanges in science and technology. Moreover, Vice Premier Yao Yilin was quoted by the official Chinese news service as calling Arkhipov "comrade," and Chen Yun alluded to the socialist nature of both countries.

3. Following Chernenko's death, both sides—but particularly the Chinese—made a series of symbolic gestures signaling a desire to improve relations. Gorbachev's acceptance speech called for serious improvement in relations with China on a reciprocal basis. Unlike the last speech attributed to Chernenko—a 22 February USSR Supreme Soviet election address—Gorbachev's remarks did not mention "serious political differences" dividing Moscow and Beijing. Following this, Chinese National People's Congress Standing Committee Chairman Peng Zhen called Gorbachev "comrade." At a private Chinese request, Gorbachev met with Vice Premier Li Peng, who conveyed party General Secretary Hu Yaobang's congratulatory message. This was the first Chinese party-to-party message

<sup>1</sup> Late Premier Aleksey Kosygin made an airport stopover in 1969 and talked with the late Premier Zhou Enlai.

Results of Arkhipov's Visit,  
December 1984

- Agreed to sign a five-year trade accord during the first half of 1985 aimed at raising the level of trade to US \$5 or \$6 billion by 1990 and increasing trade in 1985 by about 60 to 70 percent.
- Agreed to establish a joint committee on economic, trade, scientific, and technical cooperation to supervise and implement agreements and protocols.
- Agreed to exchange scientific and technical knowledge and groups, scholars, and experts, as well as train each other's technical personnel.
- Agreed to discuss Soviet help in refurbishing factories built with Soviet assistance during the 1950s and to exchange and mutually study production technology.
- Agreed to hold bilateral economic talks at the "specialist" level in early 1985.
- Agreed to consider signing a cultural cooperation agreement.

in 18 years.<sup>2</sup> Li also referred to the USSR as a "socialist" country for the first time since the 1960s and expressed a willingness to raise the political dialogue to the same level as the dialogues on economics, culture, and technology. This series of important gestures led us to reexamine trends in Sino-Soviet relations.

## Chinese and Soviet Motivations

4. We have little reporting about either side's motives and calculations in this latest round of symbolic gestures. We believe that both sides probably have been engaged in tactical maneuvering, testing each other's flexibility and intentions and determining whether something substantial can be attained at low cost. Both Beijing and Moscow probably genuinely desire to lower tensions for a variety of domestic political and economic reasons.

5. We believe that the recent shifts in atmosphere are to a large extent also intended to influence the

<sup>2</sup> After Mao Zedong's death, the Soviets sent a party message to Beijing, which the Chinese did not accept or acknowledge.

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behavior and perceptions of third parties, particularly the United States. China would like to obtain greater room for maneuvering between the United States and the USSR while in the long run establishing itself as the swing partner in the triangular relationship. Beijing does not want to appear to be standing still in the tripolar relationship while the other two sides negotiate. Instead, Beijing probably decided to see if its hand could be strengthened in dealing with both superpowers. Since December, Deng has sent signals that he wants more US cooperation in helping to bring about reunification with Taiwan. Chinese gestures to the Soviets could be designed in part as a prelude to pressuring Washington on this issue, or as a means to test US susceptibility to such pressure. The Chinese may also hope that an improved relationship with Moscow would enhance Beijing's contacts and influence with Eastern Europe and other Soviet allies.

6. Chinese domestic policy disputes and political frictions probably also have played a part in China's positive gestures to the Soviet Union in March.

disagreements over a number of issues—primarily the pace and scope of economic reform and leadership changes—have strained relations among senior leaders. Questions concerning relations with the United States and the USSR have become part of these debates. We are less clear about Deng's role in the positive gestures to Moscow—whether Deng was merely placating conservative critics or whether Deng also believed the time was right for more balance in relations with the superpowers. In either case, we have no convincing evidence of a clearly defined group in the Chinese leadership that is pushing for a major reorientation of Chinese foreign policy or that holds a very different strategic outlook. We strongly believe, moreover, that no specifically pro-Soviet faction exists in the Chinese leadership. Debates in Beijing probably focus on the degree of “tilt” toward the United States or the USSR and on how to find a balance that best serves Chinese interests.

7. On the Soviet side, we have little hard evidence concerning Gorbachev's foreign policy agenda. Initial statements by him suggest a desire to improve relations with China. The Soviets have been assiduously cultivating Gorbachev's image—domestically, but also for foreign audiences—as a dynamic, active leader. Gorbachev has already assumed a far more demanding schedule of meetings with foreign officials than either Andropov or Chernenko. Moscow may view relations with the Chinese as an area of opportunity to project a

more activist foreign policy at the perceived expense of Washington.

the Gorbachev leadership wants to establish an image of toughness and immunity to pressure toward all the USSR's adversaries, clients, and allies. This aim constrains Soviet flexibility in dealing with the real security issues that concern China. We believe Moscow is looking for modest improvements in relations with Beijing, but only in areas that would not necessitate fundamental Soviet concessions.

8. Each side appears to doubt that the other is prepared to offer substantial concessions.

Soviet officials are optimistic about a further warming in relations but skeptical that Beijing's gestures will lead to substantive changes. For their part, the Chinese have also confided that they believe it will be several years before Gorbachev will have enough power, even if he has the desire, to reorient Soviet policy toward Beijing.

### Strategic Constraints and Allied Concerns

9. There is no evidence that either Beijing or Moscow has altered its fundamental strategic outlook toward the other. We are confident that the basic differences at the root of their animosity for more than two decades remain and that the underlying issues that divide China and the USSR, as outlined in the Estimate, are still valid. Thus:

- Each views the other as harboring expansionistic ambitions that clash with its own regional political aspirations.
- Ideological estrangement and nationalistic hostilities persist.
- Beijing still has some bitter memories of the high costs of a very close association with Moscow.

10. The three obstacles posed by Beijing—Soviet occupation of Afghanistan, Soviet support to the Vietnamese in Cambodia, and Soviet forces along the Chinese border and in Mongolia—still remain a significant constraint on improvement in Sino-Soviet political relations. We conclude that the Chinese were trying to maximize their negotiating room before the recent Sixth Round of Talks in Moscow, either by omitting all references to the three security issues or by elliptically mentioning only more general “obstacles.”

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[redacted] Chinese negotiators at the talks did raise all three issues once again. Moreover, while the talks were in session and afterward, Deng Xiaoping and Hu Yaobang reiterated the importance of removing these obstacles. We believe these statements were intended, among other reasons, to put pressure on the USSR to respond to Chinese security concerns.

11. In recent years, top Chinese officials have urged Moscow to accommodate them on at least one of the three issues. This suggests China's willingness to improve relations further if the Soviets begin to deal with one of the issues, without the Chinese dropping their demand that the USSR give them satisfaction eventually on all three. Lately, Deng Xiaoping, Foreign Minister Wu Xueqian, and Vice Foreign Minister Qian Qichen have all reiterated the Chinese position that Soviet support to Vietnam in Cambodia might be the "easiest" one to solve or is the most important of the three obstacles. The Chinese probably made such recent remarks in part to encourage Vietnamese suspicions of Soviet intentions.

12. On the Soviet side, there are fundamental inhibitions to making concessions regarding the three obstacles. On Afghanistan and Indochina, agreeing to negotiate or to compromise by any degree would undermine the legitimacy of these Soviet interests, while major concessions would blunt Moscow's efforts to project its influence and power in Asia. Although the Soviets have some room to maneuver on force deployments near the border—and possible economic incentives for a thinning out of active forces—they value the existing force balance as a source of pressure on Chinese behavior. In return for easing that pressure, the Soviets would want a significant political concession rather than just reciprocal military moves from the weaker party.

13. Concern for the perceptions of allies and other friendly countries is yet another constraint on the pace and nature of improvements in Sino-Soviet relations. The Chinese have made special efforts to reassure the United States and other friendly countries that no dramatic change in policy toward the Soviet Union is expected, and that they are pessimistic about progress on political and security issues. Beijing is aware that a significant breakthrough in Sino-Soviet relations following such private reassurances would strain relations with the United States, Japan, Thailand, Pakistan, and others. If relations with the Soviet Union move too far, too fast, Beijing runs the risk of undercutting its effort

to obtain US technology and weapons and enhancing Taiwan's leverage with Washington. Moscow is similarly concerned about the possible damage to its relations with friendly countries and allies, most important, Vietnam, India, and North Korea.

### The Sixth Round of Talks

14. The Sixth Round of Talks, which was held in Moscow from 9 to 22 April, was the first formal opportunity since Gorbachev's accession for Moscow and Beijing to engage in concrete bargaining. On the basis of public press reports and private official statements, we conclude that the talks did not result in any significant concessions by either side.

[redacted] claims both

Beijing and Moscow were disappointed that the talks were setpiece presentations rather than real exchanges. China's dissatisfaction with the outcome was apparent in its official press account of Vice Foreign Minister Qian Qichen's meeting with Foreign Minister Gromyko. Xinhua, the official Chinese press, highlighted Qian's reminder that Moscow had expressed a wish for "significant improvement" in relations and that "China waits for the Soviet Union to make a move in this regard."

15. The Soviets repeated in the talks their previous call for a "juridical document" governing relations (a bilateral declaration of principles) and a resumption of border talks. They offered to discuss mutual troop thin outs along their common border but refused to talk about their forces in Mongolia. The Chinese parried these suggestions by insisting that there must first be progress on outstanding regional issues. No date was set for official talks at a higher level, such as between Foreign Ministers.

16. There were, however, two new wrinkles. First, both sides agreed to hold a bilateral conference relating to the Sino-Soviet border. We do not know the agenda of the conference. The Soviets have been pushing for a resumption of the border talks that were suspended at Chinese initiative in June 1978. We believe the Chinese may have agreed now to only a conference in order to probe for Moscow's possible proposals before deciding whether to participate in the border talks once again.

17. Secondly, a joint press statement carried in TASS following the talks' conclusion mentioned, for the first time, that progress in "political relations" was expected in the future. Beijing expressed interest in

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better political ties when Vice Premier Li Peng met Gorbachev at Chernenko's funeral. Mention of this point following the talks reflects an improved climate in relations. We assume that both sides are leaving the possibility open for more movement during the coming year, perhaps during Vice Premier Yao Yilin's visit to Moscow this July or at the Seventh Round of Talks this fall. The Soviets, in particular, have gone out of their way since the talks' conclusion to reaffirm their interest in improving ties through positive recent statements by both Gorbachev and Politburo Member Aliyev.

### What's Ahead

18. The developments listed in the inset are those we judge will occur over the next two years. In addition, we believe that there will be additional party-to-party contacts and that these contacts may gradually acquire a more formal and routine character. In pursuing additional party-to-party contacts, both sides could agree to reestablish trade union ties and exchange propaganda officials and/or press delegations. During future leadership visits, increasing mention could be made of party titles, and written as well as oral party greetings could be exchanged.

19. In conversation with US officials, the Chinese continue to claim that party-to-party relations with the Soviet Union will not be resumed. We are somewhat skeptical of these statements in light of Hu Yaobang's greetings to Gorbachev and the joint press statement following the last round of talks. But, because of these reassurances to the United States and other friendly countries, as well as for other reasons, we believe that Beijing will try to maintain a deliberate ambiguity concerning the character of their party contacts with Moscow for the next several years.

20. The resumption of Sino-Soviet party relations would clearly enhance the image of a closer overall relationship. The real content of that relationship is another matter, however. Considerations of ideology and leadership politics could intrude to complicate the relationship in new ways. China has embarked on an ambitious course of liberalizing economic reform that is politically contentious. The Soviet Union under Gorbachev is, at the same time, trying to hammer out a new, probably much more conservative, course of economic revival that is also bound to be politically controversial. Soviet elites are certainly watching Chinese reforms, some hopeful and others fearful of their success. Interest by each side in the other's leadership

### Projected Developments in Sino-Soviet Relations in the Next Two Years

- The long-term trade agreement will be signed this July.
- The Soviets will help refurbish a few factories built with their aid during the 1950s.
- There will be additional agreements on economic, educational, and cultural matters.
- There will be additional state-to-state contacts, such as parliamentary exchanges; there may be consultations between Foreign Ministers and possibly Premiers.
- An agreement to open two, possibly four, consulates will be signed; additional border crossing points will be opened.
- The number of Soviet economic and technical advisers in China will increase. (We are unsure how many, if any, Soviet advisers are currently stationed in China.)
- The number of Sino-Soviet students will increase. (Approximately 70 Soviet students currently are in China and 70 Chinese students in the Soviet Union. In comparison, for the academic year 1984/85 there were 15,000 Chinese students in the United States.)

could lead to the same sort of suspicions about internal political interference that bedeviled Sino-Soviet relations in the 1950s and 1960s. Internal disputes over economic reforms on one side could lead to the use of the other side's performance as a polemical foil, producing new ideological frictions. China has before it the tricky doctrinal problem of explaining how a "socialist" USSR can also be hegemonist. Historical suspicions and conflicting strategic interests will tend to make expanded party ties as fractious as the overall relationship because restoration of such ties could give China greater freedom to expand contacts with pro-Soviet parties and to compete with the Soviets for influence within the Communist movement.

21. [ ] the Chinese have agreed to a conference to discuss border relations. Therefore, we now judge that it is more probable than the Estimate predicted that the border talks on territorial issues will resume. Such negotiations may lead to agreement on Confidence Building Measures such as mutual notification of troop exercises along their

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common border. Even if border talks resume, we believe the current stalemate on the territorial issues will continue through the next two years.

22. We further assess that resolution of broader security concerns will remain elusive and that the following situations will continue:

- Soviet presence in Afghanistan and support to Vietnam.
- Chinese support to Afghan insurgents, commitment to the Khmer resistance, and military pressure on the Vietnamese border.

### An Alternative Outcome on the Border

23. While it is highly unlikely that Moscow and Beijing will make significant progress on the Afghan or Indochinese issues in the next two years, it is somewhat more likely that they could reach an understanding to reduce forces along the Sino-Soviet and Sino-Mongolian borders. The constraints against such moves as listed in the Estimate—such as the limited room to pull back Soviet forces because of the presence in the easternmost sector near the border of large vulnerable cities and the Trans-Siberian Railroad—are still valid. However, the military imbalance favoring the Soviets gives them the option to make some conciliatory gestures, if they choose to do so, while retaining their military superiority. For example, the Soviets could withdraw one or more of their divisions stationed in the Soviet Far East near the Chinese border or in Mongolia. They could also thin out various units by reducing manpower or relocating selected equipment.

24. Likewise, an agreement on the territorial disputes would require strong leadership in both capitals and a willingness to compromise. We do not know how such negotiations might proceed—what concessions might be offered by each side and how the other might respond. We believe, however, that the Soviets might be willing to concede some of the minor islands in the Amur and Ussuri Rivers as well as to agree to some compromise on the Pamirs; but they would be less likely to yield on ownership of Tarabarov and Bol'shoy Ussuriysk Islands (called Heixiazi by the Chinese), opposite the Soviet city of Khabarovsk and a section of the Trans-Siberian Railroad. The Chinese, in turn, would probably want to consider any comprehensive territorial border settlement in conjunction with Soviet force withdrawals, particularly of some divisions in Mongolia, and admittance by the Soviets of the "unequal" nature of the Tsarist treaties. A key

indicator of China's desire to compromise on this issue would be its willingness to drop its demand that the USSR withdraw its troops from all "disputed areas" while a territorial settlement is negotiated. This demand has prevented any progress in past negotiations.

### Implications for the United States

25. If, as we believe most likely, the USSR and China limit the improvement in their relationship to such measures as trade, cultural, and educational agreements, limited party-to-party exchanges, and some Confidence Building Measures on the border—important US interests will not be significantly affected. For their part, the Chinese continue to recognize their need for good relations with the United States:

- Beijing remains committed to modernizing its economy, for which it needs Western, and particularly US, technology and investment. China has much to gain from a long-term economic relationship with Japan and the West—particularly the United States—and less from one with the Soviet Union, especially as Beijing moves forward on its economic reform.
- Beijing remains committed to modernizing its armed forces gradually and needs Western, particularly US, arms and military technology.

26. Hence, certainly for the next two years and probably well beyond, China is not likely to adopt a genuinely equidistant position in its relations with Moscow and with Washington and its allies. Patterns may be modified somewhat, but not substantially, from the current imbalance in relations with the superpowers. For example, in the academic year 1984/85, there were some 15,000 Chinese students in the United States and approximately 70 in the Soviet Union. Last year China's total trade with the United States was about \$6 billion and with Japan \$13 billion, compared with just over \$1 billion with the Soviet Union. It would be a long time, if ever, before such statistics would balance out.

27. Most important, the US-Sino-Soviet triangular relationship probably will never be really "balanced" as long as both Beijing and Washington believe the Soviet Union is the primary threat to their security. Sino-US military contacts have suffered a setback with the postponement of the US port call to Shanghai. However, as long as the US relationship with China, in general, continues to progress and the Chinese do not fundamentally alter their strategic outlook, Moscow

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will find it hard to use China as an effective "card" with the United States, and it will be difficult for China to play the USSR against the United States.

28. In the coming months, Beijing may try to press Washington into a more direct role in promoting negotiations for the reunification of Taiwan. We do not believe, however, that the Chinese want the Taiwan issue to impede overall relations with Washington, and they will not revert to former confrontational, badgering tactics unless they perceive the United States as violating its commitment to a "One China" policy or agreements on arms sales to Taiwan. A deterioration of relations between the United States and China over such issues could lead China to attempt a far greater balance in its relations with the two superpowers than currently exists. This could lead the USSR to be more demanding toward Beijing, however. We do not believe that modestly increased frictions with the United States would move the Chinese substantially closer to the USSR.

29. Given our uncertainty over the outcome of current policy debates in Beijing, we cannot rule out the possibility of China's taking additional steps much sooner than we anticipate to improve relations with Moscow further. If Beijing and Moscow do go further than we expect in improving relations, then US interests will be affected. Moves such as reaching a comprehensive agreement on border issues involving a reduction in Soviet forces would probably have a greater impact on international perceptions than the actual substance of such agreements or ties should merit. Other countries might interpret such developments as meaning the United States was "losing" a strategic asset while the Soviets were lessening the threat of a two-front war and, thus, strengthening their position vis-a-vis NATO. More important, Soviet leaders might also conclude that the strategic danger to the USSR had eased, and this might lead them to adopt a more aggressive attitude toward the United States. We do not foresee a resolution of Sino-Soviet differences over Afghanistan and Indochina in our time frame. However, US interests would be served to the extent that the

Soviets in pursuit of a closer relationship with Beijing made concessions regarding these issues.

30. We also do not rule out the possibility of a new estrangement in Sino-Soviet relations over the next two years. Such a development could spring from many sources: an increase in Chinese support to the Afghan resistance groups, escalation of Vietnam's military campaign in Cambodia and along the border of Thailand, Soviet moves to draw North Korea closer, a more overt Soviet military threat to Pakistan or progress in Moscow's covert attempts to destabilize President Zia, as well as a variety of other potential crises around the world. Up to a point, the United States benefits from a more hostile Sino-Soviet relationship. Beijing would probably be more receptive to US policies and cooperate more fully against Soviet actions around the world.

31. Finally, our analysis might be altered:

- If a power struggle erupts within the Chinese leadership before or after Deng dies that results in the weakening of his chosen successors.
- If Deng's ambitious economic reforms experience serious problems, which in turn lead to a weakening of Deng's political position or those of his chosen successors.
- If Moscow under Gorbachev's direction makes a greater-than-expected effort to accommodate the Chinese.

A retreat from the goals of Deng's economic program would diminish one of the Chinese motivations for good relations with the United States—the need for US technology and investment. This retreat could be accompanied by a surge of anti-Westernism that might be directed particularly against the United States. However, because the Soviets are not likely to make major force reductions along the border, or to back away from their goals in Indochina and Afghanistan, any new leadership in Beijing would face the same strategic situation that currently inhibits close Sino-Soviet political relations.

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## ANNEX

SINO-SOVIET RELATIONS  
A CHRONOLOGY**March 1984**

Fourth Round of Sino-Soviet Talks convenes.

**16 March 1984**

1984-85 protocol on student exchanges signed in Moscow, increasing the number of students eligible to travel between the two nations from 10 to 70.

**26 April 1984**

President Reagan arrives in China.

**April/May 1984**

Soviets, angered over positive aspects of Reagan's trip, increase media criticism of Beijing's policies.

**4 May 1984**

TASS criticizes Chinese "military provocations" on the Sino-Vietnamese border.

**9 May 1984**

Soviets cancel planned visit of First Deputy Premier Arkhipov, claiming the delegation is not prepared for the talks; Chinese interpret cancellation as a result of Reagan's visit, recent activity in Vietnam, and Soviet domestic infighting.

**18 May 1984**

General Secretary Hu Yaobang meets with President of the Yugoslav League of Communists Dragoslav Mowkovic and indicates that the territorial aspect of the border dispute with the USSR is minor and can be easily settled. This statement was subsequently contradicted by a Chinese diplomat.

**11 June 1984**

Chernenko meets with Vietnamese party leader Le Duan and Premier Pham Van Dong, criticizing Chinese foreign policy with some of the strongest language used since October 1982.

**15 June 1984**

Chinese Defense Minister Zhang Aiping visits the United States, France, and Japan.

**27 June 1984**

Soviet photo exhibition opens in Moscow, highlighting Chinese "aggressive activity" on the Sino-Vietnamese border.

**30 June 1984**

Chinese Vice Foreign Minister Qian Qichen, Beijing's top Soviet expert, arrives in Moscow for talks with Soviet Deputy Foreign Minister Mikhail Kapitsa.

**10 July 1984**

Beijing press assails Chernenko's foreign policy, claiming it is "a destructive force slowing the course of Sino-Soviet normalization and derailing US-Soviet arms talks."

**10 August 1984**

Chinese rebut a Soviet article on the Nonaligned Movement.

**August 1984**

Beijing accuses Soviets of navigation violations on the Ussuri River.

**21 September 1984**

Foreign Ministers Wu Xueqian and Andrey Gromyko meet during UNGA; talks are calm, but not substantive.

**18 October 1984**

Fifth Round of Sino-Soviet Talks convenes in Beijing.

**15 November 1984**

Soviet journal *International Life* prints a strong criticism of Chinese domestic and international politics.

**30 November 1984**

Bilateral trade agreement signed increasing the volume of trade to about US \$1.3 billion.

**6 December 1984**

Chen Jie, head of a Chinese trade delegation to Moscow, signs the 1985 goods exchange and payment agreement based on the 30 November trade agreement.

**21 December 1984**

First Deputy Premier Arkhipov arrives on a highly publicized trip to Beijing. Three agreements signed, calling for bilateral economic and technical cooperation; bilateral scientific and technical cooperation; and the establishment of a commission on economic, trade, and scientific and technical cooperation.

**28 December 1984**

Bilateral agreement to increase the volume of trade from approximately US \$1.3 billion to \$1.7 billion in 1985.

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**9 January 1985**

The last public reference by the Chinese to their concerns over the "three obstacles" until the Sixth Round of Talks convenes in April 1985.

**12 January 1985**

General Vessey, Chairman of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff, arrives in China.

**15 January 1985**

Chinese Ambassador to Burma, after only one month in the country, hosts a private dinner for the high-ranking officers of the Soviet Embassy; the Ambassador claims the dinner was possible because of improving relations between the two countries.

**January 1985**

Chinese name new Ambassador and DCM to Moscow, both of whom are experienced Soviet hands.

**13 February 1985**

*Izvestiya* article's hard-hitting anti-Chinese critique typifies increased Soviet media criticism of Chinese policies.

**22 February 1985**

Chernenko's "election speech" casts a more positive tone on Sino-Soviet relations, initiating an easing of Soviet press comments.

**3-14 March 1985**

Chinese National People's Congress delegation visits Moscow, the first parliamentary exchange in two decades.

**10 March 1985**

Soviet leader Konstantin Chernenko dies; Mikhail Gorbachev is named his successor.

**11 March 1985**

Gorbachev states in his acceptance speech that the Soviets desire a serious improvement in relations with China, given reciprocity in the talks.

**12 March 1985**

While signing condolences book at Soviet Embassy, NPC Standing Committee Chairman Peng Zhen congratulates Gorbachev, calling him "comrade."

**14 March 1985**

Vice Premier Li Peng, head of the delegation to Chernenko's funeral, meets Gorbachev, the highest ranking meeting between the two countries in 20 years. Li conveys General Secretary Hu Yaobang's congratulatory message and calls the Soviet Union a "socialist" country. Li states China's hopes for an improvement in "political relations."

**15 March 1985**

Foreign Minister Wu Xueqian meets with ambassadors from the European Economic Community claiming that the messages to Gorbachev were protocol in nature, but a signal that atmospherics are improving.

**18 March 1985**

Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs Armacost meets Vice Foreign Minister Zhu Qizhen; Chinese state that normalization still depends on resolution of the three obstacles.

Vice Foreign Minister Qian Qichen and Deputy Foreign Minister Mikhail Kapitsa both attend the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific meeting in Bangkok.

**21 March 1985**

High-level economic delegation led by State Economic Commission Vice Minister Zhao Weichang meets with Arkhipov to discuss bilateral transportation issues.

**26 March 1985**

Chinese invite officials from Moscow's Institute of the Far East, once renowned as a hotbed of anti-Chinese propaganda, to a reception in Moscow.

**28 March 1985**

Soviet Politburo at a regular weekly meeting discusses questions related to a further expansion of trade and economic ties with China and notes importance of such progress.

**29 March 1985**

Second high-level economic delegation led by State Economic Commission Vice Minister Wang Lei travels to Moscow to discuss Soviet economics and pricing techniques.

**30 March 1985**

Soviets brief the Chinese on Schultz-Gromyko meetings in Geneva; Soviets state hopes for reciprocity in these talks.

**4 April 1985**

Soviet friendship delegation arrives in China and on 15 April signs plan for 1985 program.

**5 April 1985**

Bilateral protocol signed in Beijing calling for the exchange of 200 students and trainees during the 1985/86 academic year.

**9 April 1985**

Sixth Round of Sino-Soviet Talks convenes in Moscow.



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**10 April 1985**

Party General Secretary Hu Yaobang meets with Hong Kong press, claiming that China is willing to upgrade the level of official contacts as the Soviets desire. He cites the possibility of future meetings at the Foreign Minister/Prime Minister level.

**11 April 1985**

*Renmin Ribao* carries a front-page interview with Hu Yaobang. Hu announces the upcoming US naval ship visit and states that China has received US assurances that only conventional ships will make the trip.

**15 April 1985**

COCOM meets to discuss adopting less stringent controls on exports to China.

In talks with Australian Prime Minister Hawke, Hu Yaobang states that "threats to China's borders must be removed no matter whether the threats are in the north or the south."

**17 April 1985**

In answering a reporter's question, Deng Xiaoping mentions the gravity of the three obstacles and states that the Soviets must make some effort to remove them if they hope to see a complete normalization of relations. This is the first explicit mention of the three obstacles since January 1985. Deng also identifies Indochina as the "easiest" obstacle for the Soviets to overcome.

**18 April 1985**

During talks with former Prime Minister Heath, Deng states that the three obstacles must be removed before relations with the Soviets will improve, and that the Soviets could start by removing just one of them.

**21 April 1985**

Peng Zhen, Chairman of the Standing Committee of China's National People's Congress, arrives in Japan for a nine-day visit.

**22 April 1985**

Sixth Round of Sino-Soviet Talks concludes in Moscow. TASS carries a joint statement identifying among other areas "political relations" as an issue for improvement.

**23 April 1985**

Wang Jiachong, Vice President of the All-China Federation of Trade Unions, announces that China may restore relations with trade unions in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. These relations have been suspended since 1967.

**23 April 1985**

In a speech celebrating Lenin's 115th birthday, Geydar Aliyev, First Deputy Chairman of the Council of Ministers, states that the Soviet Union is striving seriously for an improvement of relations with China based on reciprocity.

**24 April 1985**

In a Central Committee plenum speech, Gorbachev reaffirms Moscow's commitment to improved ties with Beijing without mentioning "reciprocity."

**25 April 1985**

*Pravda* carries a joint communique signed by the Soviets and the North Koreans. Of particular interest is DPRK's signal in an official document of its growing divergence with China on a number of issues, including Cambodia. Gromyko also accepts an invitation to visit P'yongyang; if he goes, he would become the first Soviet Foreign Minister to visit the nation.

**8-12 May 1985**

Soviets and North Koreans mark VE Day with exchange of air squadrons.

**9-15 May 1985**

Visit to China by Japanese Vice Defense Minister.

**4 June 1985**

Protocol signed for a short-term exchange of TASS and Xinhua staff members.

**What Lies Ahead****Early July 1985**

Vice Premier Yao Yilin is scheduled to visit Moscow and sign a five-year bilateral trade agreement.

**Summer 1985****August 1985**

USSR Supreme Soviet delegation may visit Beijing.

**Fall 1985**

Japanese Defense Minister may visit China.

**September 1985**

Foreign Ministers Wu and Gromyko may meet at the United Nations in New York.

**October 1985**

Seventh Round of Sino-Soviet Talks will convene in Beijing.

**Spring 1986**

Possible port calls by Japanese naval vessels.

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